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Culture of peace

Globalization and interdependence: culture and development

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 14 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the declaration adopted by the participants in the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which was held in Astana on 12 and 13 September 2006.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 44, 55 (c) and 100, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yerzhan Kh. **Kazykhanov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 14 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Declaration of the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

We, the leaders of world and traditional religions, gathered at our Second Congress in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan:

- building on the success of the First Congress, which took place in the city of Astana on 23-24 September 2003 and engaged internationally recognized world religious leaders in an important initiative of inter-religious dialogue;

- wishing to help strengthen mutual understanding between cultures, religions and ethnic groups which form the basic components of world civilizations, and aiming to prevent conflicts based on cultural and religious differences;

- acknowledging that religion, having always been a fundamental element of human life and society has, at the beginning of the new century, assumed a significant new role in establishing and preserving peace;

- recognizing the great responsibility held by religious leaders for spiritual teaching and advocacy on behalf of current and future generations, and their vital role in establishing a spirit of mutual respect, understanding and acceptance in the face of new challenges;

- underlining the unique character of every religion and culture, and considering cultural and religious diversity to be an important feature of human society;

- expressing concern about increasing inter-religious and interethnic tensions in the world deriving from the exploitation of religious and national differences as a justification for violence which causes suffering to innocent victims;

- stressing that extremism and fanaticism find no justification in a genuine understanding of religion and that the vocation of all religions demands the refusal of violence and appeals to respect and peaceful co-existence with peoples and religions;

- believing that the difficulties in inter-religious and intercultural relations are related both to a fundamental imbalance in international politics, economics, social, humanitarian and information resources, and to the manipulation of religion for political ends;

- discussing and debating the above-mentioned concerns within the main theme of the Congress - **"Religion, society and international security"** in the context of two special blocs;

I. "Freedom of religion and recognition of others";
II. "Role of religious leaders in enhancing international security"

appeal to people of all religions and people of good will across the globe, and:

- call upon them to abandon enmity, discord and hatred; and embrace common respect and generosity, recognizing the reality of cultural, religious and civilizational diversity;

- declare our determination together to tackle and ultimately eliminate prejudice, ignorance and misrepresentation of other religions by placing particular focus on what religions hold in common as well as what distinguishes them;

- condemn all forms of terrorism on the basis that justice can never be established through fear and bloodshed and that the use of such means in the name of religion is a violation and betrayal of any religion that appeals to human goodness and dialogue;

- reject all false inventions and wrongly created stereotypes about the violent nature of religions and attempts to attribute terrorism to any particular religion;

- call upon all to work together to address and eliminate all causes of terrorism, thus promoting human flourishing, dignity and unity;

- declare our rejection of any form of pressure or violence to convert followers of one religion to another;

- reaffirm the pivotal role of education, youth policy and cultural activity for understanding, solidarity and social cohesion.

We also call upon the global community, international and regional organizations, states and governments all over the world to:

- actively support the process of intercivilizational dialogue; exert sustainable efforts towards creating a culture of peace, strengthening its principles as a firm basis of international politics and the life of all people;

- work to establish a more fair world, to consolidate international law and justice, and to implement UN resolutions and signed international agreements, and to find effective means of establishing peace and security all over the world;

- heed the voices of victims of oppression and terrorism and use all means to seek a just settlement of the existing conflicts, thus addressing the grievances that nurture violence;

- reject totally the development, production and possession of weapons of mass destruction and promote the strengthening of non-proliferation regimes;

- respect and protect the sanctity of religious symbols and places and take appropriate measures.

Based upon the abovementioned, we, the leaders of world and traditional religions, RESOLVED TO:

- take concrete collective measures for encouraging and highlighting positive perceptions of inter-religious relations by organizing joint meetings, seminars and addresses in the mass media, the Internet and other places of influence;

- strongly promote interreligious tolerance among younger generations to make them more devoted to dialogue and encourage them recognize universal values;

- integrate questions of the dialogue between civilizations and religions into curricula at all educational levels with a view to helping young people to respect and understand religious and cultural difference without hostility;

- use our spiritual influence, authority and resources to further establish peace, security, stability and contacts between each other in order to make a combined contribution to the prevention and resolution of disputes among different religious communities;

- offer our experience and best efforts to governments and people or groups and powers involved into conflicts in order to assist them in easing tensions, forming where appropriate joint delegations to conduct negotiations with them;

- commit to make efforts to promote and realise the goals stated in this Declaration, and to assign the Congress Secretariat to propose a plan for the best possible translation of these recommendations into reality;

- conduct the Congress of religions on a permanent basis and hold the third Congress of the leaders of world and traditional religions in 2009. For the Secretariat to present proposals on time and place of the next forum;

- bring to the attention of the General Assembly of the United Nations the conceptual and practical role performed by the Congress in promoting dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions and its considerable achievements in interreligious understanding, inviting support for the further activity of the Congress.